

Phil and Jean Balmat

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AUG 11 2000

CALFED Bay-Delta Program

August 9, 2000

Mr. Steve Ritchie, Acting Executive Director
Cal-Fed Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Final Programmatic EIS/EIR

Dear Mr. Ritchie:

My family has been involved in Agriculture for four generations, both of my Great Grandfathers farmed in Iowa, the last three generations of Balmats in California. I live and own farmland in the San Joaquin Delta on Roberts Island and farm almonds in Merced County. I am very concerned about Cal-Fed and its potential negative affects on agriculture in general and the delta in specific.

As a resident of the delta and an avid angler, I spend as much time as I can on the delta waterways and love it for what it is. I certainly want to see it protected. Like almost all farmers and ranchers that I know, I have a great appreciation for wildlife and the environment. I am not convinced that Cal-Fed really has this interest at heart, but am willing to listen.

Cal-Fed is purported to be beneficial to all concerned, agriculture, wildlife and southern California water users. I have yet to see how removing thousands of acres of farmland from production will benefit agriculture. The State and Federal Governments already own millions of acres of land in California. Is it necessary for the State to take even more land from private citizens? If wildlife habitat is one of your goals, why not create that habitat on land that the State already owns?

Agriculture is the largest industry in California. It contributes greatly to the Gross National Product, is the largest employer in the state and produces more commodities that can be exported to contribute to the nations balance of trade than any other industry.

The Final Programmatic EIS/EIR is a huge document. Most of us in agriculture spend long days farming. As a result, time to review such a huge document is at a minimum. This puts farmers and ranchers at a distinct disadvantage with people who are paid to spend their working days designing, writing and reviewing such documents. The time allowed for public comment is inadequate. **Please allow more time for public comment and review. I think a period of not less than 6 months to be a minimum.**

If the California is to continue to grow, the demand for food and water will also increase. **The answer to the water problem will never be solved without more storage facilities.** Removing land from agricultural production will not enhance the production of food, jobs and tax revenue. It does nothing to increase the water supply. Natural habitat requires water just as does farming.

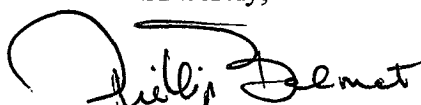
I also find it somewhat paradoxical that those same people, who cry the loudest about the loss of farmland when a housing development takes land out of production, eagerly give their support when the government wants to take thousands of acres from production for wildlife habitat. That leads me to question the motives of those groups. Believe me, I am no supporter of new housing developments on farmland.

Living and working on the land on a daily basis, I see the positive affects agriculture has on wildlife. The irrigation canals and drain ditches in my area are full of life, including crawfish, catfish, carp, bluegills, ducks and muskrats. The tules and cattails along the banks provide habit for a large number of small birds and animals. Pheasants, dove and quail are plentiful in corn, wheat, safflower, asparagus and alfalfa fields.

As a state we must consider that as the population in southern California continues to grow, their demand for water will also grow. The more the population in the south grows, the more their demand upon California's finite water supply, the more water available to southern California the more that population can and will grow and again their demand for our limited water supply will continue to increase even further. If left unabated, this never ending circle will continue until southern California's demand for water has grown so large that there will be inadequate supplies for California's "Golden Goose," agriculture.

Agriculture in not a special interest, it is the interest of every man, woman and child who enjoys the bountiful supply of high quality and inexpensive food that is set forth before them by the farmers and ranchers of California.

Sincerely,



Phillip Balmat

cc: Govenor Gray Davis
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
State Senator Patrick Johnston
Representative Richard Pombo
Assembly Member Michael Machado
San Joaquin Board of Supervisors